

DALIT CHRISTIANS

A SOCIO - ECONOMIC SURVEY



Ambrose Pinto SJ

14032

CLIC -
CPHE

Fr. Ambrose Pinto S.J., is a member of the staff of Ashirvad, a Centre for Spirituality and Action and is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, St. Joseph's College, Bangalore 560 001. He has submitted his thesis for a Doctorate in Political Science to the Mangalore University.

SOCHARA

Community Health

Library and Information Centre (CLIC)

Centre for Public Health and Equity

No. 27, 1st Floor, 6th Cross, 1st Main,
1st Block, Koramangala, Bengaluru - 34

Tel : 080 - 41280009

email : clic@sochara.org / cphe@sochara.org

www.sochara.org

Thelma Narayan

DALIT CHRISTIANS:

A SOCIO - ECONOMIC SURVEY

ARCHDIOCESE OF BANGALORE

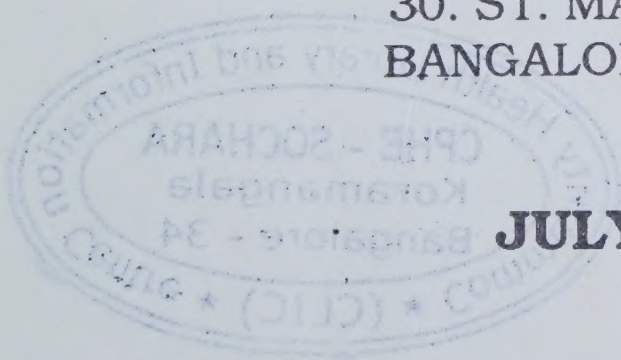
AMBROSE PINTO SJ

ASHIRVAD

**CENTRE FOR NON-FORMAL AND
CONTINUING EDUCATION**

**30. ST. MARK'S ROAD,
BANGALORE - 560 001**

JULY 1992

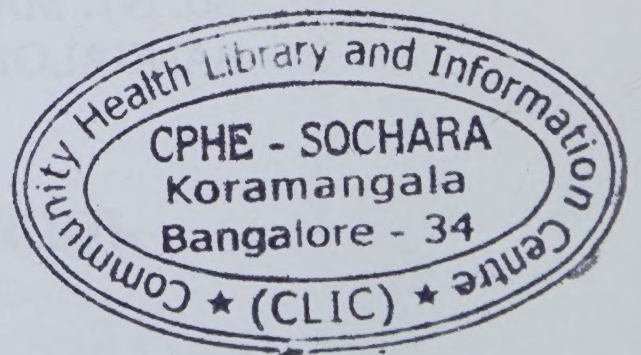


Price : Rs. 15/-

The cover design is by J.C. Anthony, a Dalit Catholic from Raichur

Printed at:

Sevasadan Training Institute
Koramangala, Bangalore - 560 034



IC-110

14032 N92

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
Setting and Methodology	1
The Dalit Scenario	6
Religious Situation	22
Conclusions	27
Towards an Action Plan	31

Most Rev. Dr. ALPHONSUS MATHIAS,
JUD, Ph.L.

Phone: 330838 /
330438

Archbishop's House
Post Bag No.2
75, Miller's Road,
Bangalore - 560 046

27th June 1992.

FOREWORD

The Scheduled Castes in the Country today are in an ambivalent position. Economically, they are the most backward and socially the most retarded. For centuries, they have existed as the most deprived and ostracised people. They have not been permitted to play a significant role in nation-building. Vested interest groups have kept them out in the decision making process of the country. Any attempt to organise them was looked upon with fear and suspicion by Upper Castes and Classes.

But today, the Scheduled Castes cannot be ignored. They are becoming more and more aware of their strength. The Samata Sainik Dal, the Dalit Sangarshan Samiti, the Buddhist Movement and the Christian Dalit Forums in various States are all active organised associations of SCs. In recent years the SCs have even learnt to use political power for their advancement and put up resistance in a united manner. Today no political party can ignore them. These attempts to organise themselves for their rights have not always met with success. It is unfortunate to note that incidents of atrocities on them are showing an upward trend. Even in our own State of Karnataka, in the last few months there have been violence on the Harijans in Gulbarga, Mysore and Raichur.

There are many among the SC fold who have embraced Christianity. The Gospel of Jesus with its principles of equality, love and compassion has attracted many of them to the Christian fold. Many converts have benefited from the services of the Church and have attained some degree of social betterment. But because of their conversion they have been denied all privileges of reservation - to the Legislature, employment in Government services and Educational Institutions of the State. This is no doubt unconstitutional. How can a Constitution bestow the right to profess, practice and propagate a religion of one's choice on the one hand and at the same time take away rights of the SCs on becoming Christians? Christianity as a religion no doubt believes in equality of all people. But Christians are a part of the Society at large. Christian SCs are still treated as untouchables in Society.

The Church remains committed to the cause of the Dalits in general and Dalit Christians in particular. Certain measures have been initiated. The Archdiocese has already committed herself to the education of the Dalits by a preferential policy in their favour. I hope the Report will be read by all concerned with the cause of the Dalits in the Archdiocese with a view to evolve an action plan. On behalf of the Archdiocese I want to thank Fr. Ambrose Pinto S.J. and the Centre for Non-formal and Continuing Education for undertaking the work and providing us with necessary data.

Rev. Dr. Alphonsus Mathias

Archbishop of Bangalore

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bangalore Archdiocese is perhaps one of the first in the country to initiate an objective study on the socio-economic situation of Dalit Catholics. The study covers 487 households. These 487 households have a population of 2670 people. The study covers the various socio-economic and religious aspects including demographic features, caste, sex and age composition, education, housing, land, possession, occupation and debts.

I thank the Archbishop, Alphonsus Mathias for his encouragement. His interest in the study is an indication of his deep desire to initiate an action plan for the empowerment of the Dalits. He has been already instrumental in implementing an educational policy in favour of the Dalit Catholics in the Archdiocese which has become a model policy for other dioceses.

The Non-formal Centre of Ashirvad sponsored and financed the project. I express my gratitude to Fr. Claude D'Souza SJ, its Director. At the very outset I want to state that the interpretation and analysis do not represent the policies and views of the Archbishop or the Archdiocese. They may not even be the views of the Centre for Non-formal and Continuing Education. They are my findings and I assume full responsibility for them.

There are many others who have cooperated in the survey. Six Jesuit Scholastics went round the villages to gather the data. Their keen interest in the project and their willingness and readiness to go round was an expression of their own commitment to the Dalits. They succeeded in establishing rapport with the Dalit Catholics in spite of initial hostile reaction in two villages. It was their patience, enthusiasm and interest that went a long way in getting out this report.

Sr. Albina, the Head of the Sociology Department, Mount Carmel College was involved in the tabulation of the data. It was a tedious and time-consuming task. In spite of her busy schedule she spent more than a week at the Centre for the task. It is her meticulous work and organised tabulation of the data that helped

in completing the report in record time. I am very much indebted to her for helping out.

The report I hope will give an adequate understanding of the Dalit Catholics in the Archdiocese and the rural areas of Karnataka. I do not claim that I am well versed with the problems of Dalit Catholics. But the report may serve as an eye opener to many who are not aware of or touched by the problems of the Dalit Catholics. Hopefully the report would also help those who are insensitive to Dalit issues. The purpose of the work will be best served if the Church commits herself uncompromisingly to handling the dalit problem in an objective and humane way. That might give the Catholic Dalits a sense of human dignity in consonance with their Baptismal consecration.

June 1992

AMBROSE PINTO SJ.

— — — — —

SETTING AND METHODOLOGY

"We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens:

Justice, Social, Economic and Political;

Liberty of thought expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation;

In Our Constituent Assembly this twenty-sixty day of November, 1949, do Hereby Adopt, Enact And Give To Ourselves This Constitution."

Preamble of the Constitution of India

The Constitution of India assured all citizens of the country Justice-social, economic and political and equality of status and opportunity. The Framers of the Constitution committed themselves to work for a country where justice, liberty, equality and fraternity would prevail. By the 42nd Amendment Act of 1976 the country committed herself to the socialist path. The principal aim of a socialist state is to eliminate inequality in income, status and standards of life.

Given the heritage of India and its deep rooted caste system that had been responsible for socio-economic inequalities, through the instrumentality of Article 14 of the Constitution, the Fathers of the Constitution desired to make equality a living reality for the masses of India, specially the SCs and STs. The state resorted to compensatory state action for the purpose of making people who are unequal, equal in wealth, education and social life. Preference to socially and economically disadvantaged persons was a package meant to eliminate inequalities and to place the marginalised groups on a footing of equality.

But that dream of creating an equal society has remained utopian. The socially and economically backward classes specially the SCs and STs have not fully reaped the benefits of the affirmative action of the State. One of the important reasons for the prevalence of inequalities in our country is the stiff opposition and resistance any affirmative action on behalf of the BCs, SCs and STs evokes from the stronger and powerful sections of society. Mere provisions in the constitution for the weaker sections have not helped them to develop. The most unorganised groups, the SCs and STs still remain on the fringe of development.

In recent years the SCs and STs have been asserting their right for a legitimate share in resources. Whether it is a question of Mandal or an outcry for a Presidential candidate from the SC fold or demands for certain rights in the state or central list, these are all indicators of the assertion for rights by the BCs, SCs, and STs. The consequence of such an assertion has been a vehement opposition to all such demands by the upper castes and classes.

Caste violence is on the increase. There has been burning of Dalits and their possessions in many parts of the country. Untouchability still remains a curse in spite of legislation against it. Atrocities on SCs and STs have been daily occurrences. Anyone who reads the daily newspapers cannot but be a witness to the victimisation and suppression of the SCs and STs.

The Church in India has played an important role in the lives of the SCs and STs. It is their schools and colleges that have admitted all classes of people including the untouchables. Many untouchables have embraced Christianity and many others have become Dalit leaders. Conversion attempts were intended to raise their social status and free them from the clutches of caste. The dominant groups in society have resisted all attempts at such conversions. They have claimed that the SCs are a part of Hindu society. In recent years, in parts of the country there have been attempts to reconvert them to Hinduism. Welfare measures and government benefits are not given to SCs other than those of the Hindu fold. In some states even the law has been manipulated by vested interest groups to discourage conversions.

The Church has been taking an increasing interest in the welfare of Dalits in recent years. The Church has even admitted that it has followed a discriminatory policy towards Christians of SC origin. In fact the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India, at its biennial meeting in Pune, in January 1992 vowed to work for the upliftment of the Catholic Dalits by fighting casteism in the Church. Caste, Poverty and illiteracy are all closely related realities. In order to empower Dalit Catholics the Bishops spoke of a preferential policy for Dalits in admissions to Catholic educational institutions, remedial programmes for Dalit Catholics, adequate financial help, preference for employment in Church related organisations and adequate representation in parish and diocesan councils. The Karnataka Bishops' Conference gave a further impetus to the issue through a separate Pastoral to the faithful in Karnataka. The measures are meant to provide a sense of human dignity and equality to Dalit Catholics and integrate them into the mainstream of the Church and society.

This study is meant primarily to assist the Archdiocese of Bangalore and other dioceses of Karnataka to gain insight into the impoverished situation of Dalits in the present context. A commitment to the Dalits demands sufficient knowledge of their present situation and the various programmes that can be undertaken on their behalf.

The study covers the following areas:

- a. Family size of Dalit Catholics.
- b. Caste and sub-caste composition of Dalit Catholic Communities.
- c. Their marital age.
- d. Educational background of Dalit Catholics.
- e. Their economic situation as reflected in their housing facilities, value of houses, possession of land and other agricultural tools and animals.
- f. Their occupation and indebtedness.
- g. The religious situation.
- h. An action plan.

It is true only eleven villages of the Archdiocese have been surveyed. But this sample of 11 villages with 487 households is sufficiently large enough to draw conclusions for the rest of the rural Dalit Christian population and to draw up an action plan.

TABLE 1

VILLAGES SURVEYED		POPULATION		
Name of the Village	No. of SC Catholic Households	Male	Female	Total
1. Bettada Alasuru	17	51	49	100
2. Silvepura	13	44	42	86
3. Fatimapura	68	241	192	433
4. Lourdunagar	36	122	177	239
5. Mariapura	111	318	304	622
6. Harobale	71	205	186	391
7. Jyothinagar	12	28	30	58
8. Marianpalya	20	51	51	102
9. Susaipalya	55	105	116	221
10. Anekal	15	38	39	77
11. Solur	69	184	157	341
Total Households	487	1387	1283	2670

METHODOLOGY

The Archdiocese has over 50 percent Dalit Catholics. They are distributed in the urban as well as rural areas. The KGF region, with over 25,000 Catholics, is entirely Dalit. The study was done in eleven villages of the Archdiocese. Total coverage of the entire Archdiocese would have given us a total picture. But the limitations of time, energy and resources at one's disposal make the task impossible.

A sample of eleven rural villages was investigated. Data collection was done through interviews of 487 households by the Jesuit scholastics. Many of the villagers specially the elders, were illiterate. The interview method was the only viable mode,

to get information. The services of the scholastics were obtained for the sake of objectivity. Information regarding religious aspects was carefully obtained. The cooperation of the Parish Priests was sought. The Archbishop's circular to the Archdiocese was beneficial too. The Parish Priests were very supportive. The Archbishop was more than encouraging.

But the Scholastics had to face many obstacles. The study was viewed with suspicion and reservation in many villages. People wanted to know the purpose of the survey. Another experience of the Scholastics was that the people expected some benefits and assurances to flow from the Church in return for information. There is polarisation among the Dalit Catholics on the leaderships issue. Some of the villages viewed the present Dalit leadership in the Archdiocese as selfish reflecting vested interest. Any reference to leadership and those associated with the leader, incited antagonism and even physical harm to the data collectors in two villages. There were rumours, even before entry into the villages, that the data was being collected at the behest of the self-proclaimed Dalit leader.

Once the identity of the investigators came to be known to the people, in most villages, people were cordial. They shared their stories of agony and anguish. The problems encountered by the data collectors had to be viewed in the light of Dalit Catholics socio-economic situation. Once the people were clear that the data collection was at the initiative of the Archbishop and that the data gatherers were Jesuit scholastics, information became accessible. No doubt, the Dalit Catholics were critical of the Church. They criticised Parish Priests and Sisters. They felt that nothing had been done for their welfare. They wanted the Church to do everything for them. It is an attitude that perhaps has its origin in the way missionaries in the past looked after them. A begging and dependent attitude seems to be deep rooted. A sense of independence and autonomy to take responsibility for life is badly lacking.



THE DALIT SCENARIO

Facts and Figures.

FAMILY SIZE:

The size of the family explains the socio-economic condition of a community. In developed communities today, the tendency is towards nuclear families. Economy and size of the family are often inter-linked. 487 Dalit Catholic households in eleven villages have a total population of 2670 (refer table.1) which is equivalent to 5.48 members per family.

TABLE : 2

NO. OF MEMBERS IN EACH HOUSEHOLD					
Name of the village	Small Families 1 to 5	Medium Families 6 to 8 9 to 11	Large Families 12 & Above	Total no. of Families	
1. Bettada Alasuru	7	8	2	-	17
2. Silvepura	5	5	2	1	13
3. Fatimapura	32	21	7	8	68
4. Lourdunagar	11	13	9	1	36
5. Mariapura	59	40	10	2	111
6. Harobale	38	27	5	3	71
7. Jyothinagar	7	4	1	-	12
8. Marianpalya	11	7	2	-	20
9. Susaipalya	45	9	1	-	55
10. Anekal	11	3	1	-	15
11. Solur	46	18	4	1	69
Total	272	155	44	16	487

56 percent of Dalit Catholics have small families, 31.75 have medium size families and 12.37 percent of the households have large families. Agriculture favours large families. But most of the Catholic Dalits are landless agricultural and casual labourers. They cannot run the risk of big families. Yet due to lack of

enlightenment, half of them have more than three children. In the village of Lourdunagar only eleven families out of 36 are of small size. In Fatimapura out of 68 families 32 families are of small size. In both the villages majority of the families are medium and large. The rest of the villages have over 50% small families.

CASTE :

TABLE : 3

CASTE

Name of the Village	Holeyas	Adi-Karnataka	Madigas	Others
1. Bettada Alasuru	-	17	-	-
2. Silvepura	13	-	-	-
3. Fatimapura	40	-	15	13
4. Lourdunagar	35	-	1	-
5. Mariapura	42	45	16	8
6. Harobale	1	36	31	4
7. Jyothinagar	2	5	5	-
8. Marianpalya	1	17	2	-
9. Susaipalya	-	55	-	-
10. Anekal	14	1	-	-
11. Solur	69	-	-	-
Total	217	175	70	25

Caste is a kind of stratification in Hindu society. Although caste has been abolished by the Constitution of India, it survives even among Catholics. The Dalit Catholics have succumbed to its influence. Superior and inferior status are inherent differences among SCs. Among the 127 castes under SCs in Karnataka the majority of the Dalit Catholics in the rural areas of the Archdiocese belong to the Holeyas, Adi-Karnataka and Madigas Castes. The respondents were not eager to reveal their caste names. It is possible that the younger generation of Dalit Catholics though they know their origins and caste sub-groups, do not like to articulate them. In some villages the people were aware that they were of Dalit origin, yet they were not fully aware of their sub-castes. Many of the Dalit Catholics said that there is no caste among Christians. But when it came to intermingling with other

TABLE : 4

AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION OF THE MEMBERS

		0 - 5		6 - 10		11 - 15		16 - 20		21 - 25		26 - 30		31 - 40		41 - 50		51 - 60		61 & above	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Bettada																					
Alasuru	8	5	5	9	12	11	5	4	7	5	2	4	4	3	3	4	6	2	1	1	4
Silvepura	3	4	6	6	6	9	9	6	6	5	2	2	6	7	6	6	1	1	-	2	2
Mariapura	33	35	48	44	44	35	44	40	42	37	29	26	30	37	31	33	16	11	13	18	20
Fatimapura	26	22	36	23	35	35	35	32	31	31	21	24	17	21	13	11	14	11	14	14	2
Lourdunagar	18	19	25	15	25	18	18	12	14	7	15	5	9	16	19	9	7	2	1	3	-
Harobale	35	23	32	27	24	27	24	24	25	13	17	21	20	26	24	14	11	6	9	10	3
Jyothinagar	2	8	1	7	6	6	2	5	1	3	3	2	4	5	3	2	2	1	-	1	-
Marianpalya	7	11	3	8	8	3	3	7	3	7	9	9	4	1	3	2	8	4	1	2	1
Susaipalya	6	13	10	12	10	12	12	13	12	9	9	12	13	15	18	15	8	4	9	11	10
Anekal	9	5	5	3	3	3	7	4	5	5	3	1	6	3	6	3	3	2	-	3	1
Solur	25	14	31	30	24	24	23	21	12	19	17	15	14	18	19	13	12	6	9	12	7
Total	173	159	206	187	187	187	185	168	158	141	127	121	127	152	145	112	88	50	57	77	50

TABLE : 5

AGE AT MARRIAGE

Name of the village	Below 18		19 - 20		21 - 22		23 - 25		26 - 30		Above 30	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1. Bettada Alasuru	-	13	2	3	3	-	4	-	3	-	-	-
2. Silvepura	-	7	-	2	3	2	7	1	7	-	-	-
3. Fatimapura	1	40	4	9	11	4	22	1	9	2	5	-
4. Lourdunagar	-	17	1	17	6	3	15	2	8	2	1	-
5. Mariapura	1	62	7	17	14	12	27	3	24	2	10	-
6. Harobale	-	56	8	14	16	2	33	3	12	2	3	-
7. Jyothinagar	-	6	-	3	2	1	2	-	7	-	-	-
8. Marianpalya	-	15	2	4	5	-	8	-	2	-	-	-
9. Susaipalya	1	39	7	9	17	2	15	1	1	-	2	-
10. Anekal	-	5	-	1	1	2	3	-	1	-	2	-
11. Solur	1	42	6	21	14	3	32	6	2	1	7	-

TABLE : 6
NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE LITERATES

Name of the village	Lower Primary		Higher Primary		Secondary		PUC/TCH		B.A./B.SC.		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1. Bettada Alasuru	8	14	15	3	7	5	-	-	1	-	53
2. Silvepura	9	8	9	8	16	9	5	2	-	-	66
3. Fatimapura	50	30	40	28	32	27	2	9	3	-	223
4. Lourdunagar	30	31	24	17	14	16	2	2	-	-	137
5. Mariapura	75	55	59	62	43	36	1	2	3	1	337
6. Harobale	33	31	27	20	10	15	2	3	1	-	142
7. Jyothinagar	2	9	4	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	19
8. Marianpalya	9	16	6	8	10	6	2	1	-	-	58
9. Susaipalya	18	18	21	12	14	20	0	5	1	-	110
10. Anekal	7	5	3	5	9	6	1	0	-	-	36
11. Solur	43	37	41	30	24	16	3	6	2	-	201
Total	284	254	249	193	181	157	19	30	11	1	1382

TABLE : 7

NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE ILLITERATES

		6 - 12		12 - 15		16 - 21		22 - 35		36 - 45		46 & above		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
1.	Bettada Alasuru	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	0	5	3	6	29
2.	Silvepura	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3	2	3	11
3.	Fatimapura	2	5	3	4	6	8	23	22	8	11	19	19	130
4.	Lourdunagar	2	6	2	1	1	2	4	19	11	5	4	4	61
5.	Mariapura	9	3	4	2	13	18	27	33	24	22	25	33	213
6.	Harobale	5	5	2	1	14	11	33	45	11	12	20	19	178
7.	Jyothinagar	-	2	4	1	3	1	5	6	3	1	4	1	31
8.	Marianpalya	0	1	1	0	2	2	6	5	2	4	3	4	30
9.	Susaipalya	-	-	1	1	-	1	13	18	10	8	11	25	88
10.	Anekal	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	7	2	7	5	3	27
11.	Solur	1	3	1	5	4	3	22	14	1	7	13	20	94
Total		20	27	20	16	45	49	137	173	74	85	109	137	892

castes, they said they have felt the limitations, even within the Church. They even perceived some of the priests as casteist.

AGE AND SEX COMPOSITION :

The sex ratio has socio-economic implications. There has been a shortage of females in India. The same criterion holds good for SC converts to Christianity. For every 100 males there are 92.50 females among Dalit Christians. Out of the 2670 Catholic Dalits surveyed in 487 households, 1387 were males and 1283 females. Much of the population is young. Those above 30 years are only 731 in number. Those below 15 years are 1097, roughly 41%. Children and young adults predominate. Those below 30 years are 1940, i.e. over 70% of the population.

MARITAL AGE:

Most of the girls are married before the age of 18. Among the males marriage is uncommon before 20 though there are a few instances. But the majority of the males marry between the age of 23 and 25. Early marriage is a sufficient indicator of backwardness. In some villages, there are instances of girls who married at the age of 12. Cases of divorce are rare. In two families there are two people living together outside wedlock. In advanced communities, even among Christians, the age for marriage is between 25 and 32 for males and above 21 for females. Lack of education and poverty deprive the rural people of their adolescence. They move from childhood into adulthood in order to earn a livelihood.

THE EDUCATIONAL LEVEL :

The educational level of any group of people could be taken as an indication of development. The educational attainment of SC converts is examined below :

The high school at Silvepura caters to the needs of the people of Fatimapura and Lourdunagar. The Harobale high school is sufficiently close to Jyothinagar. Marianpalya and Mariapura have high schools.

Education facilitates economic and social mobility. It is the chief determinant of the enhancement of individuals in society. Education has a direct bearing on one's occupation and income.

It is a means by which parents transmit their socio-economic levels, values and life styles to their offspring. From the view point of development, earning, social status and socialisation, education is adominant feature. New opportunities in life are open to the highly educated. The number of SC Catholic literates and their levels of education is given in table 6. There are a few who have had Pre-University and University education though many students drop out at the secondary level.

TABLE : 8
HIGHER EDUCATION

Village	PUC	Male		PUC	Female		
		B.A.	M.S.W		B.A.	NURSING	TCH
1. Bettada Alasuru -		1	-	-	-	-	-
2. Silvepura	5	-	-	-	2	-	-
3. Fatimapura	2	3	-	7	-	-	2
4. Mariapura	2	-	-	2	-	-	-
5. Mariapura	1	3	-	2	1	-	-
6. Harobale	2	1	-	2	-	-	1
7. Jyothinagar	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
8. Marianpalya	2	-	-	1	-	-	-
9. Susaipalya	-	1	-	5	-	1	-
10. Anekal	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
11. Solur	3	1	1	6	-	-	-
Total	19	10	1	25	3	1	3

One possible reason is that high schools and colleges are not located in the vicinity of the locality of SC converts. Among these dropouts, the majority have dropped out for economic reasons. Being poor, the Dalit Catholics cannot afford secondary and college education. That there is a single postgraduate and no doctor or engineer among these sections is something to be ashamed of. It is a sad reflection on the Church that only 62 persons have gone beyond S.S.L.C. in these villages. While the Church runs so may educational institutions and boarding Schools

one pertinent question would be for whose benefit are they if they do not serve the weakest?

The drop-out rate from primary schools is high. In Silvepura 5 have dropped out in 13 families. Jyothinagar has only 12 families. Out of these 17 have dropped out. In Solur 52 have dropped out, a majority of whom are males. One of the reasons for the high dropout rate in Solur is that, there is no school run by the Church for boys there. Government school may not be attractive, given the functioning of such schools. The other reasons for dropping out are poverty, lack of interest in education and lack of family income which compel many to drop out and earn for the family.

Enrolment in schools is no guarantee for literacy. There is 51.76% of literates among Dalits, a percentage in keeping with the national average. Harobale and Jyothinagar have more than 50% illiterates, though the rate of illiteracy is 33.41%. The rest of the population is below the school going age. Most of the Dalit Catholics drop out before reaching high school. There are only 338 Dalit Catholics out of 2670 who have reached the secondary stage. That makes a mere 12.66%. The drop out rate is the outcome of deprivation in Dalit households. It is also possible that children of Dalit Catholics do not have sufficient social and psychological strength to persevere. Coping with studies may not be easy for them. Dropouts add to the family's meagre income. In the short run many Dalit Catholics find the dropouts beneficial for they add to the family's income. With a meagre education, they have less chances of better employment, income and status. Their low aspirations for education block both their educational and occupational mobility.

HOUSING :

Shelter is a basic need of human beings. It provides protection from the elements of nature and preserves the privacy of the members of the household. Adequate housing is a necessary condition for a decent living. From the point of view of usefulness, status and social standing, housing is of great importance.

TABLE : 9
TYPE OF HOUSES

	Hut	House	<u>Huts/Houses</u>		<u>Homestead Land</u>		Home- less
			Owned	Not Owned	Owned	Not Owned	
1. Bettada Alasuru	8	9	14	3	13	3	
2. Silvepura	-	13	13	-	13	-	
3. Fatimapura	8	60	64	4	64	4	
4. Lourdunagar	4	32	24	12	23	13	
5. Mariapura	31	77	87	21	90	18	3
6. Harobale	34	37	63	8	61	11	
7. Jyothinagar	10	2	12	-	12	-	
8. Marianpalya	1	19	14	6	13	7	
9. Susaipalya	11	44	33	22	16	39	
10. Anekal	4	11	14	1	14	1	
11. Solur	3	65	33	35	24	44	1
Total	114	369	371	112	343	140	4

TABLE : 10

NO. OF ROOMS

	One	Two	Three	Four or more
1. Bettada Alasuru	15	1	1	-
2. Silvepura	2	4	5	2
3. Fatimapura	21	29	12	6
4. Lourdunagar	5	25	3	3
5. Mariapura	35	38	27	8
6. Harobale	38	21	11	2
7. Jyothinagar	10	2	-	-
8. Marianpalya	1	9	8	2
9. Susaipalya	16	26	9	4
10. Anekal	5	8	2	-
11. Solur	12	15	36	5
Total	160	178	114	32

TABLE : 11**APPROXIMATE VALUE OF HOUSES**

	2000 & less	2000 to 4000	4000 to 5000	5000 to 7000	7000 to 10000	10000 & above
1. Bettada Alasuru -	-	-	8	1	3	5
2. Silvepura	-	-	-	3	8	2
3. Fatimapura	1	8	5	12	16	26
4. Lourdunagar	-	5	3	9	16	3
5. Mariapura	-	10	3	45	39	11
6. Harobale	17	26	12	1	7	8
7. Jyothinagar	10	1	1	-	-	1
8. Marianpalya	1	1	3	4	3	7
9. Susaipalya	6	9	14	10	1	15
10. Anekal	-	3	2	2	6	2
11. Solur	10	4	13	21	12	8

Housing reflects the economic status and the living standards of people. Every human person aspires to have a dwelling. Though small dwellings by and large Catholic Dalits have their own houses. 23% live in huts while 76% live in houses. In Harobale most of the houses are huts. Jyothinagar is not very different. The type of houses are poor majority of them one or two room accommodations. Only a section of the people of Silvepura and Fatimapura have decent houses. In Bettada Alasuru, other than two houses, all the others have a single room. In Harobale and Jyothinagar the situation is similar. 32% of Dalit houses are single room dwellings, while 36% are two room dwellings. The average family size of 2 to 6, living in a single room or two rooms, very often along with livestock, is an indication of poverty. There are no bathrooms and lavatory provisions in all these one or two-room dwellings.

The size of the houses and the number of people living in these houses reflects the poor housing conditions of Catholic Dalits. In almost every family rooms are shared. There is over crowding when there is a single or two-room accommodation. Overcrowding deprives them of privacy. When the houses are

one, two or even three rooms; the rooms are used for many purposes such as sleeping, cooking, storage etc. They have to use their tenements for all purposes as they have no other choice.

TABLE : 12
LAND PARTICULARS

	Irrigated land			Lighting in the house	
	0 - 2 acres	3 - 4 acres	5 - 7 acres	Electricity	Kerosene
1. Bettada Alasuru	7	4	-	9	8
2. Silvepura	1	3	1	11	2
3. Fatimapura	22	5	1	39	29
4. Lourdunagar	8	-	-	-	36
5. Mariapura	21	1	-	53	55
6. Harobale	5	2	-	19	53
7. Jyothinagar	-	-	-	1	11
8. Marianpalya	-	-	-	16	4
9. Susaipalya	6	2	-	19	36
10. Anekal	4	1	-	4	11
11. Solur	24	3	2	28	40

Possession of land is recognised as an indicator of the family's financial stability. Much of the land in Karnataka is in the hands of the two dominant castes - Vokkaligas and Lingayats. The land owned by others is negligible. The Dalit Catholics have hardly any irrigated land. In most of the villages they do not own land at all. Though almost all the Dalit Catholics are linked with agricultural activities, they are landless and those who possess some land are either small or marginal peasants.

Electricity is still not available to 60% of the Dalit Catholics. Only 196 households have electricity. In fact in Lourdunagar Dalit Catholics have no electricity in their houses. In Jyothinagar out of twelve families only a single family has electricity. In Anekal only four houses are electrified out of 15.

POSSESSION :

To gain further insights into the wealth of the Dalit Catholics, information regarding their possession was collected. The diffi-

culty the data gatherers faced was their reluctance to disclose the value of all their possessions. They were unable to provide reliable data regarding the total value of goods they owned. The majority did not know prices of different goods. Therefore it was decided to gather information of their possessions.

Domestic animals are a source of income and are considered valuable property. From the table we can understand that most of them do not have animals. Very few own T.Vs and motorbikes. A person's economic stability can be measured in terms of the movable and immovable property he holds. The possession of agricultural tools, animals, cycle, TV, radio, motorbike etc. are indicators of economic wealth. Dalit Catholics, for the most part being coolies, do not have access to these. Very few of them possess land of their own as indicated in table 12.

TABLE : 13
POSSESSIONS

		Agricul- tural	Drought animals	Milk animals	Sheep & goats	Cycles	TV	Radio	Motor bike
1.	Bettada Alasuru	-	1	3	2				
2.	Silvepura	1	1	1		4	3	2	4
3.	Fatimapura	2	1	2	-	2	-	5	-
4.	Lourdunagar	-	1	1	-	-	-	4	-
5.	Mariapura	-	11	13	4	3	1	13	-
6.	Harobale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Jyothinagar	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
8.	Marianpalya	-	-	1	-	-	2	5	-
9.	Susaipalya	-	1	5	1	1	6	-	-
10.	Anekal	5	1	5	1	1	1	-	-
11.	Solur	-	5	5	1	3	-	6	-

OCCUPATION :

There are two bonded labourers in Jyothinagar. All the rest are coolies. The majority of the Dalit Catholics are coolies. In the absence of skills, the Dalit Catholics have no other alternatives. Agricultural and other casual labour are the only avenues open to them. Agriculture is seasonal. Most of the Dalit Catholics work for about 200 to 250 days in the year as coolies.

There is a clear link between occupation and economic status. Manual labour normally indicates a lower economic status. There are a handful among the Dalit Catholics who work as carpenters, barbers, peons and plumbers. Occupation determines their income and life style. It is an important factor in determining the prestige and status of an individual. The Dalits normally work as coolies, factory workers, petty shop keepers and semi-skilled workers.

TABLE : 14

OCCUPATION

	Coolie	Agricul- ture	Govt. emplo yee	Private	Self emplo yed	Busi ness	Others
1. Bettada Alasuru	11	11					
2. Silvepura	11	5	5	3	-	2	-
3. Fatimapura	31	27	3	2	5	3	9
4. Lourdunagar	20	8	1	5	6	-	9
5. Mariapura	85	24	4	2	4	-	-
6. Harobale	60	7	1	1	8	-	1
7. Jyothinagar	11	-	-	1	-	-	1
8. Marianpalya	14	2	-	2	1	1	6
9. Susaipalya	27	9	6	3	24	2	1
10. Anekal	14	9	-	-	-	-	-
11. Solur	50	8	1	2	4	6	-

LOANS TAKEN :

When Dalit Catholics need money, they either go to landlords or make private arrangements through money lenders of the locality or friends in the village. Very often the interest rate is exorbitant, as high as 120% to 60%, which increases the principal amount. So the Dalit Catholics are caught in the whirlpool of indebtedness. Much of the money borrowed is for construction of houses, marriages and funerals. Since there is no other source of labour other than coolie work, repayment of loans becomes difficult if not impossible. Since money-lenders and landlords offer time-bound loans, this compels them to borrow further, to pay back the loan.

TABLE : 15**LOANS TAKEN**

	Below 1000	1000 to 3000	3000 to 5000	5000 to 7000	7000 & above
1. Bettada Alasuru	-	5	4	-	2
2. Silvepura	-	-	-	1	-
3. Fatimapura	2	2	6	2	11
4. Lourdunagar	1	1	3	1	2
5. Mariapura	1	6	15	6	6
6. Harobale	2	8	4	3	6
7. Jyothinagar	-	6	1	3	1
8. Marianpalya	-	2	2	3	2
9. Susaipalya	1	6	5	10	4
10. Anekal	-	1	1	1	1
11. Solur	-	6	3	10	2
Total	7	43	44	40	37

TABLE : 16**LOAN OBTAINED FROM**

	Landlords	Government	Private arrangements Farmers, Villagers & friends
1. Bettada Alasuru	4	4	3
2. Silvepura	1	-	-
3. Fatimapura	4	6	13
4. Lourdunagar	1	2	5
5. Mariapura	6	17	11
6. Harobale	6	7	10
7. Jyothinagar	-	7	4
8. Marianpalya	-	5	4
9. Susaipalya	2	6	18
10. Anekal	-	1	3
11. Solur	-	19	2
Total	24	74	73

Out of 487 households, 170 families are in debts. Not even 50% of the loans are from the government. Rest of the borrowings are from landlords and private arrangements. 40 families have over Rs. 7000/- loan each. More than 50 percent of the families in Bettada Alasuru are in debts. In Jyothinagar out of 12 families eleven families are in debts. Other than one family all the others are freed from debt in Silvepura, one of the better-off-villages.

PURPOSE OF BORROWING OR TAKING LOANS

	House cons- truction	Marriage & Funerals	Illness	Buying of animals	Agricul- ture	Domes- tic	Others
1. Bettada Alasuru	3	4	1	1	2	2	
2. Silvepura					1		
3. Fatimapura	2	7	4	1	2	4	3
4. Lourdunagar	2	2	-	-	1	3	-
5. Mariapura	6	4	3	14	2	-	5
6. Harobale	4	8	1	2	3	6	
7. Jyothinagar	2	1	-	7	-	-	3
8. Marianpalya	1	1	-	4	-	-	3
9. Susaipalya	3	6	2	2	2	6	5
10. Anekal	1	-	1	-	-	1	-
11. Solur	1	4	1	6	1	2	8
Total	25	38	13	37	14	24	27

Seven people have borrowed for more than one purpose. Much of the loans have been for construction of houses, marriages and funerals and buying of animals.

— — — — —

RELIGIOUS SITUATION

"The longing for a just society is causing revolutions all over the world. Since many Christians are deeply rooted in the status quo they tend to be primarily concerned for the maintenance of law and order. Where the maintenance of order is an obstacle to a just order, some will decide for revolutionary actions against that injustice, struggling for a just society without which the new humanity cannot fully come. The Christian community must decide whether it can recognize the validity of their decision and support them."

*Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches,
Uppsala, Sweden.*

BETTADA ALASURU : There are 17 Dalit Catholic households in Bettada Alasuru. The village falls under Kodihalli Hobli, in Kanakapura Taluk. There are two communities of people living here- the upper caste Vokkaligas (Gowdas) who own practically all the land and the Dalits. By faith the Gowdas are Hindus while the Dalits are Christians. Caste discrimination is deeply felt. They cannot mix freely with the Gowdas. There are still caste atrocities and discrimination.

The presence of the Church has not affected the lives of Dalit Catholics. Though there is a church building, they belong to Harobale Parish which is too far for them. They prefer to be under the jurisdiction of the Kanakapura Parish. There is not even a primary school for the benefit of their children. Even facilities of market and health are not easily available to them.

They are proud of their faith. But the church has not taken much interest in their welfare. The presence of the church can become prophetic here if sufficient measures are immediately taken to stop the oppression of the Dalit Christians by the Gowdas. A Catholic primary school could prove to be an asset. As desired by the people, they could be permitted to be within the fold of the Kanakapura Parish instead of Harobale.

MARIAPURA : Mariapura Parish presents a picture of harmony, on the periphery,. But deep down there are serious differences between the Reddys, Banagigas and the Dalits. Dalits are further divided into Holeyas, Madigas, Adi-Karnataka and others. Practically all the Dalits are coolies. Many of them work on the 50 acres of land owned by the Parish.

In terms of settlement, the upper caste people live in the lower part of the village. They have land, water and electricity. They are provided with plentiful water supply. The Dalits live in the upper part with hardly any land. The land they owned in the past has been lost on account of indebtedness.

Caste discrimination is not very distinct in the Church. Besides living separately, the Dalits bury their dead in a separate area of the same cemetery. The Parish has no difficulty in their being buried anywhere. But Dalits themselves want to be buried close to their ancestors. At the level of Parish administration, it is perceived that the Dalit Catholics are hardly represented on the Parish Council. They are of the opinion that the Parish does not take their interests seriously. Even a union of Dalit Catholics, which is essential for building dalit identity, has not been encouraged by the Church. The upper castes have been obstructing the formation of a union by Dalits.

Illicit liquor preparation in the village is rampant. Practically all the Dalits drink after work. The upper castes profit by the trade as they employ Dalits to prepare it. The church has not been able to root out drunkenness which has landed many Dalit families in violence and debts.

In normal circumstances there is not much communication between different castes. Friends visit the houses of each other. But there are hardly any inter-caste marriages. Even among the different subsects of Dalits there are no marriages.

A good intermingling is possible between castes in Mariapura through the efforts of the church. An organisation of the Dalits could help them to fight alcoholism, illiteracy and indebtedness among themselves. The Dalit need training to empower themselves. The church could play a prominent role in this.

SILVEPURA, FATIMAPUR AND LOURDUNAGAR :

Silvepura Parish consists of 3 villages - Silvepura, Fatimapura and Lourdunagar. In Fatimapura and Lourdunagar the Dalits outnumber the other castes numerically. In Silvepura and Fatimapura Dalit Catholics belong to the middle class. Practically all of them own land and have their own houses. Some possess T.Vs, radios and vehicles. Electricity and water facilities are available to most of the people. Some of the people from the villages are even employed in cities. Lourdunagar is poorer. The village has problems of water and electricity.

The faith of the people is strong. The high school of the Archdiocese provides education upto S.S.L.C. In fact in these three villages, many have completed S.S.L.C in recent years on account of the Archdiocesan school. There is a tendency to be dependent on the Church. Many drop out after S.S.L.C. Since alcoholism is rampant, the Church needs to think of ways and means of eradicating it through adult education. The youngsters in the high school need to be guided towards higher education.

HAROBAL: The Harobale Christian community presents a picture of division within itself. Half the Dalits community is Kannada speaking while the other half is Tamil-speaking. The Tamil Dalit group is worse off economically.

Members of the Dalit group in Harobale are considered untouchables in hotels and restaurants. They have been assigned separate places. As a community they live away from Caste Christians, all by themselves, segregated from the rest.

There is a high school run by Sisters. Most of the students there are Caste Christians and Hindus. The Dalits have not been encouraged to utilise the services of the high school. Dalit Catholics are poor; most of them are coolies. Alcoholism is widespread. Most children drop out by the time they reach high school. Given the extreme poverty of the Dalits here and the discrimination against them an immediate action plan, with the support of the people, is needed. If people are excluded from the developmental process, dependency and a receiving attitude will be further perpetuated. Jyothinagar is a part of Harobale Parish.

MARIANPALYA: The Dalit community here belong to the middle class. People are proud of their faith. Most of the Dalits are of Telugu origin. Many of the Christians are coolies. There is a high school run by the Church here.

SUSAIPALYA: The Dalit Christians here live away from Caste Christians in colonies of their own. There are two villages of Hindu Dalits nearby. They are provided with a few developmental projects by the government. The Dalit Christians feel neglected both by the government and the Church. There is not much discrimination against the Dalit Christians by the rest of the Christian community. In fact even the Caste Christian community is equally poor.

The land on which their houses are built belongs to the Church. When people migrated here the Church provided them with house-sites. Therefore the houses cannot be sold. In fact, about 10 new houses remain locked. Their inmates have settled in Bangalore.

There is widespread alcoholism. All Dalits Catholics as well as Vaddas are poor. There is not much education. The villages do not have even sufficient drinking water. Much of their land is mortgaged to money lenders. Most of them live by fetching firewood from the forests. Each bundle of firewood brings them Rs. 16 to 20. The roads are bad. The villages are practically isolated from the rest of the area.

ANEKAL: The Anekal Parish Dalits are found in Vanakanahalli, Kalanayakanahalli and Singasandra. Economically poor, almost all of them are coolies. They are proud of their faith and quite appreciative of the services of the Church. The community is hardly educated. A majority of the elders are uneducated.

SOLUR: The Parish has 69 Dalit families. The Sisters run a hospital, a nursery school, a Grahini school and an embroidery school for women. A sister works full time as a social worker. In terms of education people have to attend the local Government high school. But the standards of the local high school are so low that students are not likely to benefit from it.

As a group the Dalits are sharply divided - one group owes allegiance to the dalit Sangarshan Samiti and the others is opposed to it. Such a division is not a help for mobilisation of the community as a whole. There are a large number of illiterates among these who are 22 years and above. People are poor. A Church school is an urgent need.

CONCLUSIONS

"We resolve also to have the courage to speak out for the rights of the disadvantage and powerless, against all forms of injustice, no matter from what source such abuse may come; we will not tie our hands by compromising entanglements with the rich and the powerful in our respective Countries."

*Catholic Asian Bishops Conference,
Manila, 1970*

The Church has contributed a great deal in terms of energy, dedication, commitment and religious personnel to society at large. From the foregoing analysis of the socio-economic condition of Dalit Catholics it is clear that the developmental benefits have not percolated to the Dalit Catholics. Their upliftment has to be based on an integrated approach. The Church should think of holistic developmental approach that would enhance their economic development, educational advancement and acceptance in the ecclesial and social mainstream.

The major findings of the study are:

It is astonishing but true that the living conditions of Dalit Catholics are no different from those of Dalit non-Catholics in the general population. Girls marry early, even before 18 and males after 20 years. In developed communities the age of marriage is higher. The Dalit Catholics live in separate colonies away from the Caste Catholic communities. Around 25% of them live in huts. Most of them have their own houses. But over 30% do not own their homestead land. Over 32% live in single rooms.

More than 75% earn their livelihood as coolies. Their lives are governed by landlords who belong to the upper castes. Their occupation tells us about the place they occupy in society and the income they earn. The nature of the occupation is temporary, seasonal or daily wage. They work not more than 250 days in a year. Occupational mobility is non-existent. They have no irrigated land. Villages like Jyothinagar and Lourdunagar have

no electricity at all. They do not possess much livestock, cycles, radios, T.Vs and other furniture.

Most are underemployed. They are exploited economically. They live mainly by selling their labour power. Their wages are not clearly fixed. The temporary nature of their work renders them destitute. They have no participation in and control over decisions in the productive process. On account of a lack of organisation, they lack bargaining power. Many of them are debtors and constantly in debt. Their low earnings and savings increase their indebtedness. Much of the borrowing is from landlords, money lenders and by private agreements which demand very high interest rates.

Alcoholism is rampant in all these villages. A lot of wealth is wasted on alcohol. When asked for reasons for consumption of alcohol, most of the villagers responded that it helps them to overcome the monotony and drudgery of their daily lives. Its effect on health and material well-being have not been fully realised.

Caste discrimination is not rampant though it exists within the Church. But in many places the attitude of the Church has not been supportive. The Church has neglected them in spite of their poverty. Whenever there are two caste groups, priests have often sided with the higher castes. The Dalits' participation in Church decisions is minimal. In some places they are not allowed to draw water from the village wells and in Harobale they are denied entry to public eating places.

One thing stands out from the facts and figures that irrespective of religion, the Scheduled Castes face many problems of a social economic, political and educational nature. On the whole the condition of Catholic SCs is not very different from that of SCs of other religions. In fact the Chinappa Commission Report (1990) observes: "By and large, the Christian community in Karnataka is an advanced community except for SC and ST converts, whose position has not improved very much for the better. Thanks to the all pervasive caste system which has penetrated the barriers of religion also, SC and ST converts to Christianity and their

descendants continue, to a great degree, to be victims of the same social injustice to which the SCs and STs are subjects". Christianity, a religion meant to liberate the oppressed from the clutches of caste and bring about socio-economic equality among all believers has not succeeded. Instead, socio-economic and educational development has depended on caste even within the Christian fold. Christian converts from dominant castes have benefitted handsomely from Church institutions and have reaped economic benefits quite unproportionate to their numbers.

SC converts, on the other hand have been marginalised. These converts had embraced Christianity to avoid the stigma of caste and acquire human dignity. Their conversion had deprived them of all constitutional benefits. It is disheartening that the Church has not taken a keen interest in their welfare.

Catholic educational institutions have come to signify quality even outside the Christian fold. The upper castes in society have utilised these institutions to climb the ladder of success. But the SC converts have not managed to get into their portals. These educational institutions, established primarily for the education of the community, have conveniently managed to keep out the poor Catholics most of whom are SCs in order to maintain their "high standards".

The SC Catholics, like their counterparts in other religions, are mostly agricultural and casual labourers. They are engaged in coolie jobs and depend on the dominant castes for their survival. Dependence on the upper castes means economic dependence. They own no land of their own. Having hardly any education and skills, they have not been able to generate self-employment.

The Church meant to be the proclaimer of the good news to the poor and the weak has not played this role as far as Dalit Catholics are concerned, notwithstanding the Church's pronouncements in their favour. Her pronouncements in their favour have only served to cover up her insufficient involvement in their empowerment. Though meant to establish a communion of believers, the Church has succeeded in perpetuating the attitudes of the traditional caste system.

The missionaries who came to India worked among the marginalised promising them liberation from the clutches of caste and won adherents from the SC / ST fold to the Church. But once the Church got organised and institutionalised the higher castes within the church kept all power and offices to themselves. Poverty and backwardness still continue to haunt SC converts.

There is hardly any doubt that the converts have gained social status through their conversion. Most of them do not even want to be called SC Catholics. Their non-involvement in menial jobs has had a favourable impact. The educational efforts of the Church in recent years specially in villages like Silvepura, Mariapura, and Marianpalya where there are High Schools, have been beneficial to their empowerment. Where there has not been any educational activity especially in villages like Solur, Bettada Alasuru and Anekal, people have remained backward. As a community, they feel superior to the SCs outside the Christian fold who suffer on account of untouchability and lack of social interaction. But their economic position has not improved. In those Parishes where the Archdiocesan efforts have been to provide education, the SC Catholics have benefited to some extent.



TOWARDS AN ACTION PLAN

"Christians are totally committed to the unity and equality of all mankind under the headship of Christ, the Son of Man, and hence to unity and justice in the world society in which the human family lives."

*Report of the Beirut Conference on World Development,
sponsored by the World Council of Churches and the
Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace, p.9.*

The Church's approach to the Dalit Catholics development has been patriarchal and paternalistic. Some money had been doled out. Wells have been dug and a few houses have been constructed. But the benefits of development have not trickled downwards. In many cases what the Church gave has already been lost. The reason is that Dalit Catholics were not made participants. They remained 'objects' of development when they should have been the 'subjects'.

The Church believed and still believes that illiterate men and women of Dalit origin are not in a position to participate in their own development. This is an erroneous assumption. The Dalits can be effective leaders and planners of their own development if they are animated. Development necessarily means providing the Dalits a just share in the limited resources. To get their rightful share in resources and decision-making, the Dalit Catholics must begin their own development plans by creating their own organisation. Only by their own struggle for rights the balance can be tilted in their favour.

The model of development that I propose for the Church in Bangalore is not one of providing more and more services for the Dalits. The church must not be preoccupied with providing services to Dalits but must help them to create their own organisations and to define their own development plans. Though the tendency of Dalit Catholics is to be dependent on the Church, they are capable of running their lives and planning their own development.

The stress should be not merely on economic development of Dalit Catholics but on human resources development. Human resource development is more crucial than economic and technical development. The task of the Church should be to build awareness by providing the right type of education so that Dalit Catholics are able to form their own organisation, articulate their aspirations and make righteous demands. Once their creativity and energy is unleashed, they would be able to tackle every kind of problem or issue.

To evolve such organisations, the Dalits need empathetic leaders. The present leadership among Dalit Catholics is not accepted by all Dalit Catholics. These leaders have been functioning like bosses rather than partners on account of their superior knowledge and credentials; they have refused to believe in the people's potential.

No doubt, Dalit Catholics are in need of all-round development. But this development must come from faith in the people. People have sufficient ability to see, to judge and to act provided they are fed with real facts. Leaders are not meant to provide readymade answers, to decide for the people and lead them all through. The role of the leader is to help people to take their own initiative and to run their own organisation, to set in motion a process of collective reflection and decision-making.

How can the Church help in setting up a leadership that becomes a part of the Dalit Catholics' struggle? The Church as an institution is not in a position to do. The leaders of the Parish communities have at times created fear and lack of self-confidence in Dalit Catholics thus devaluing the capabilities of Dalits. This is the outcome of prejudices in the Church against Dalits.

The interviews with the people and the attitudes of the Priests of the Parishes and the Archdiocese in general, expose the real existence of prejudice and bias against the Dalits. Stereotypes used about them are: dull, lazy, liars, irresponsible, drunkards, fighters and dirty. These stereotypes are indicators of a biased attitude. The Church as a whole considers the Dalit Catholics as inferior and less intelligent. There is no great desire to be involved in their struggles. In some villages work is done for them instead

of with them. One of the greatest obstacles in the way of the local church is a lack of understanding of developmental models. The church has to get acquainted with the different models of development. This might help her to involve herself in the empowerment of Dalit Catholics.

The widespread apathy towards the plight of the Dalits can be explained by the theological tradition of the clergy. Clerical theology, derived from academic traditions and texts, has been a theology of rituals. It is a theology taught in the Seminaries, a theology of the aristocracy, cut off from the lives and struggles of ordinary people. Such a theology can only lead to domination of people through 'cultic priesthood' and oppression of the weak through myths, rites and rituals. The context of such a theology is the context of the institutional church, centered on cult, Sunday Eucharist, laws and people's submission to the pastor. Such a theology is a disservice to the people. It has failed to enter into the legitimate world of Dalit Catholics. A ritualistic Church, So long as she is enclosed by the comfort of the presbytery and functions more as a 'boss' than a 'servant' is not capable of initiating transformation.

The most urgent need is to switch over from 'clerical theology' to people's theology to discover the God of Jesus in the People. The Pastor's role is like that of Moses. God chose Moses and the prophets to work for the liberation of His enslaved people. Doing God's will for Jesus meant struggling for justice, and providing life-giving services to the victims of an oppressive socio-religious system. Faithfulness to God was no allegiance to rituals, cults and beliefs but the practice of justice and love. Only when the Church understands its role as an instrument of justice, compassion and love will it have relevance for the Dalits. That is why what the local church leaders need is the experience of Jesus for justice and freedom. Jesus was not merely the God of the poor working with the poor and supporting them; He was poor. Is it possible for the church to incarnate Christ by becoming compassionate and involved, and learning from the experience of people's suffering, their struggles and hopes? People's theology is a dynamic one that tells us that God is active even today as He was during Exodus.

This is not to say that the Church has done nothing significant for the Dalit Catholics. Though she has not succeeded in wiping out the stamp of caste, she has been instrumental in helping them acquire some amount of human dignity. Membership of the Church has enabled the Dalits to participate in the liturgy, become priests and religious. Religiously, a Dalit Catholic is better off than his counter-part in the Brahmanical religion. Educationally the Church's services have helped at least a portion of them.

Just as the Church has its bias, the Dalits too have their biases and prejudices against the Church and its institutions. Being a dominant institution, that the Church is at the service of the dominant groups, is something that cannot be denied. Dalits are aware of this. There is pessimism in their lives. Many of them have begun to believe that they cannot prosper and that the Church is not at their service. There is a feeling of being victimised by the Church. There have been attempts to unite them to win their legitimate rights from the Church. But these attempts have been dominated by opposition and hostility to the Church with suspicion and resentment towards her. Such attempts to unite the Dalits have not succeeded so far, because of a lack of leadership and organisation. Thus criticism of the Church stems from an attitude of anger towards the uncaring ways of clerics and the Church's institutions.

Dalit Catholics are powerless. They are enslaved like God's chosen people in two ways. They lack power over valued things. Their lack of buying capacity makes them victims of their socio-economic situation. Secondly, they lack power to live in harmony with people. Since most of the Dalit Catholics are coolies, they have to live under the authority of others. At the slavery of Egypt God thundered through the prophets as the champion of the downtrodden. Later God comes in the form of the carpenter. His identity as poor is clearly manifested. Therefore a mere option for the Dalits would not make us Jesus-like. Identification and fellowship with the poor alone can help the Church to be Jesus-like.

The present Dalit leadership has not been acceptable to all

sections of Dalits. There is a major polarisation. The Dalit group is further polarised on language issue. Instead of supporting the present leadership that has no mass base among Dalits, is it possible for the church to build up a grass roots level movement of the people, by the people, for the people? The Church has sufficient potential. But what is required is to go beyond the issue of language that has splintered the Dalits into ethnic groups. Only when the entire Dalit group is mobilised irrespective of language, will they be able to fight for their legitimate rights from the Church and the State.

The task of mobilisation is not easy. The first step would be to set up Parish Dalit groups. Each Parish should be permitted to have their own groups chosen from the Dalits by the Dalits. Once the groups are formed at the Parish level, an association of the Dalits at the Deanery level should emerge. From the Deaneries an Archdiocesan association of the Dalits, for the Dalits should be formed by the Dalits. with the present attitude of the Church such a mobilisation may be difficult, though not impossible. Could the Church appoint a full time pastor or individual, gifted with social skills, sensitive to the needs of the Dalits, well versed in the theology of the people to initiate a move to form such associations in the Parishes, Deaneries and the Archdiocese? It is important that such a person should be able to rise above the language issue which has obstructed the development of the Dalits in the Archdiocese so far. People should be considered more important than language.

Can individuals within the church who have great love for Dalits help these Catholics to shed fear, regain their lost confidence and develop a belief in themselves? These leaders need social skills to help Dalit Catholics to analyse their situations, clarify issues in order to evolve strategies and action plans for development. Any action plan has to be scientific and within the context of larger issues and struggles. That is why the leaders must learn from the people, from their knowledge and experiences, and help them to reach their own conclusions. The focus should be the development of the human potential within the Dalit group not merely economic development.

The primary task of the Archdiocese is to prepare a set of democratic leaders to organise the Dalit Catholics. The methodology for training has to be a participatory one, aimed at creating an analytical and questioning mind in participants. Right from the start, as the outcome of their training these animators should involve the Dalits in the decision-making process. To involve people in decision making means to make them feel good about themselves, to build confidence in them and reinstate their lost self-respect. It is, in other words, to empower them. The animator's role is to provide a vision of the present society and the society we want to create.

The trained Dalit Leaders should also be able to produce democratic, non-hierarchical and collective leadership. It is important that the Dalit Leaders after training do not decide for their people but decide with them and for them. Values like justice, equality, honesty and solidarity should be focused all through the programme. The entire discussion at the level of training should be based on the reality as experienced by the Dalit Catholics, the analysis of their situation and the exploration of various options.

IMMEDIATE ACTION PLAN :

Changes do not take place overnight. They are slow. To create such organisations and to set in motion a process of collective reflection and action it will need time. Till that time, the Church as she helps the Dalit Catholics to form their own organization to fight for their rights could work for the following in collaboration with the whole Christian Community.

- a. To fight for the legitimate, constitutional benefits of the Dalit Catholics by organising the whole ecclesiastical machinery, through representation, morchas and protest marches. This will bring about solidarity and union within the Christian Community as a whole.
- b. Through ecclesiastical legislation, all types of discrimination against Dalits should be banned. The anti-Dalit clergy should be summarily suspended from ministry if deliberately found discriminating against Dalits.

- c. An assessment of prevailing conditions of Dalit Catholics in urban areas and KGF should be initiated.
- d. All extra Church property could be distributed to homeless dalit families especially in rural areas through a participatory process.
- e. Compulsory free education upto S.S.L.C. should be provided for poor Dalits. However, the economically well-off Dalits should be made to pay, in order to inculcate a sense of self-esteem in them.
- f. In Parishes where there are no primary schools for Dalit Catholics, immediate attempts should be made to start such schools which could be gradually up-graded to high schools.
- g. The colleges run by religious in the diocese should be requested to accommodate all Dalit Catholics who apply for admission and have aptitude for higher learning even if they do not have merit.
- h. The caste identity of Dalit Catholics should not be publicised in educational institutions to avoid bias. All such records should be kept confidential.
- i. A Centre for the training of Dalit Catholics for competitive examinations and remedial work should be set up.
- j. More than college education the Dalit Catholics are in need of vocation-oriented education. The church should start a few technical schools for their benefit.
- k. Politically all Dalit Catholics should be organised to get a proportionate representation in Parish councils. There should be reserved seats in Parish Councils in proportion to their population.
- l. All types of segregation in the Church should be avoided.
- m. The Archdiocese should immediately take steps to establish a net-work to respond to frequent atrocities on Dalits.

There is a 'dependency' culture on the part of the Dalit Catholics at present. Even the few well-off Dalits make demands

on the Church for financial assistance. As far as possible the Dalit Catholics should be made to feel independent. As a rule, transporting them to city boarding schools when there are church schools in their villages, will, in the long run, be counter productive. The Dalits, as far as possible should be educated in their own villages. If their houses are of one or two room accommodation, then facilities for study and recreation can be provided in the school or Parish hall. It is important to build in them a sense of self-esteem. By mobilising youth and people, alcoholism and other evils, widely prevalent among them, can be eradicated by the Dalits themselves.

What is urgently needed is not mere economic development of Dalit Catholics but changing their negative self-image, value system, thinking patterns and lack of self-confidence through a process of awareness-building and motivation. Once motivated and organised, the Dalit Catholics themselves would be able to change or transform their present situation and bring about changes in their lives. Their social situation would then be different.

"In the Church of Christ and for that matter in modern society, why should there be issues adversely affecting the Dalits, the women and the on organised labourers? Does the existence of these issues point to an increasing realisation on our part, of the intimate link between our faith and life? Catholic Christians should be fully aware that meting out justice is a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel. The Church has always understood that Christ identifies with the poor and the oppressed."

*Lentern Pastoral of the Karnataka Region
Catholic Bishops' Council, 1992*



DALIT CHRISTIANS SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL SURVEY
ARCHDIOCESE OF BANGALORE

HOUSEHOLD SCHEDULE

District Taluk Village Ward

HOUSEHOLD PARTICULARS

1. Serial No. of Household
2. (a) Name of head of Household
- (b) Size of the Household
- (c) (i) Caste/ Hereditary group
- Caste
- Hereditary group
- (ii) Is it known by another name(s)? (specify)
- (d) (i) Sub - caste
- (f) Are you (Head of Household) a member of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe/Other Backward class
- (g) (i) Is there any occupation(s) traditionally associated with your caste? (code) (Yes - 1, No. - 2)
- Yes No
- (ii) If yes, please specify the occupation(s)
1. 2. 3.
- (h) Is your caste/sub-caste considered by others as backward?
- Yes No
- (i) Mother Tongue
3. Does the household hold any cultivable land Yes No
If Yes, write the holding in acres and cents:

		Irrigated		Non-irrigated		Total	
		Acres	Guntas	Acres	Guntas	Acres	Guntas
(a)	Owned	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(b)	Leased in (held as tenant)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(c)	Leased out (given to others on tenancy basis)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
(d)	Total (a + b +c)	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

4. Particulars and facilities available in the household:

- (a) Type of House (Hut - 1 / House - 2)
- (b) Structure of House (Katcha - 1 / Pucca - 2)
- (c) Ownership of House (Owned - 1 / Not Owned 2).....
- (D) Ownership of homestead land (Owned - 1 Not owned 2)
- (e) No. of rooms (for urban only)
- (f) (i) Main source of drinking water
- (ii) Distance of main source of drinking water from the house
- (g) Main source of lighting in the house
- (h) Main source of fuel for cooking
- (i) Toilet facilities

5. Total annual income of the household (in Rupees)

PARTICULARS OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6. Serial No.										
7. Name									
8. Relationship to Head									
9. Sex (Male - 1 / Female - 2)									

10.

Age (in completed Years)
(Record the age as given)
11.

Educational Standard
12.

Marital Status
13.

Age at Marriage (Record
actual completed years)
14.

If worker, description of work.
- (a)

Main occupation
- (b)

Subsidiary occupation
15.

If involved in work, manually whether, working for himself-1/ Working for others - 2.
16.

If wage earner/
- (a)

Wage rate per day in (Rs.) for
- (i)

Main Occupation
- (ii)

subsidiary occupation
- (b)

No. of days worked in a day
- (i)

Main occupation
- (ii)

Subsidiary occupation
17.

Distance of Place of work
18.

Employment Status
19.

Sector in which employed
20.

If not working whether seeking or available for work (Yes - 1 / No - 2)

APPLICABLE TO NON-STUDENTS BETWEEN TO 15 YEARS

- 1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10
21.

Serial No. As given
in part II above
22.

Whether attended
school or not Yes - 1 / No - 2
23.

If studied for how many years
(actual no. of years studied)

24. If drop out
- (a) At what age (Record in completed years)

.....
- (b) Reasons for dropping out

.....
25. If working. Whether working within the village/town or outside the village/town (Within - 1 / Outside - 2)
26. Place of work
-
27. If not attended school, why?
-

DESCRIPTION OF ASSETS\

Actual number and values to be recorded)

	Number	Current value (In Rupees)
28. House
29. Agriculture tools
Mostly wooden
Mostly Iron
30. Fodder Chopper
31. Thresher
32. Pump Sets
33. Tractor
34. Draught animals
35. Milch animals
36. Sheep & Goat
37. Poultry
38. Bullock Cart
39. Pigs
40. Tools used by artisan & Servicing class (List the items & give total value only)		
(i)	(ii)

(iii)

(iv)

41. Assets of Trade & Commerce

(i) Shop

(ii) Kind of Shop (Owned - 1 /
Rented - 2)

42. House

43. Furniture & other material objects

(i) Cycle/Motor Cycle/Car

(ii) Radio/Transistor/T.V.

(iii) Dining Table

(iv) Sofa Set

(v) Refrigerator

(vi) Telephone

INDEBTEDNESS

44. Have you taken any loan during
the last 3 years (Yes - 1 / No - 2)

45. If Yes, total amount of loan taken (in Rs.)

46. Main reasons for taking loan

47. From whom taken

48. Amount of loan outstanding (in Rs.)

49. At what interest?

Date

(Name of the Investigator)

"Doubtless among the more important and urgent problems facing the Church, we must mention the Dalit Movement specially in the South ... We ask all to work unitedly to see that justice is meted out to our Dalit brethren.

The demands of the Dalits can be put mainly under three heads.

1. Those which concern socio-economic benefits, education housing, jobs, etc.

The Church has done much in this regard. We have asked Regional and Diocesan authorities to redouble their efforts on a priority basis with a special emphasis on education for all. National, Regional and Diocesan Social Service Societies will tackle this problem on a priority basis. Other dioceses of India within their possibilities, will be at their service.

2. Empowerment of Dalits in the structures of the Church. This is an urgent request; only it takes time. Many efforts have been made and more needs to be done as soon as it is possible, without waiting to do the most perfect. We ask all to work patiently, unitedly and in Christian spirit towards this end. If this is achieved, we will have resolved an important aspect of this question.
3. Respect: This demands that Catholics of the upper castes - Bishops, Priests, Religious, Laity-change their attitude towards the Dalits. In the church, all are God's children, our only glory being the sonship of God given to us at Baptism. "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek: all have the same Lord, who gives with abundance to whoever calls on Him" (Rom 10,12). We plead with all to reflect seriously on this, and by their change of attitude build up the Church of Christ, the one family of God.

Our efforts in this line with the Government, must continue with unabated vigour. We urge all organisations at the national and regional level, which have been involved in them, to persevere and intensify their efforts."

General Body Meeting of CBCJ.

Pune 1992

This is a concerned study on the situation of Dalit Catholics in the rural areas of the Archdiocese of Bangalore. The study highlights the social, economic and religious situation of the Dalit Catholics. The facts and figures in the survey are important. But the greater stress is on the action plan proposed by the author. This work will prove useful for all those seeking strategies and action plans to liberate the marginalised groups to achieve their own empowerment.